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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

25X1

COUNTRY Germany (Russian Zone)

DATE DISTR.

10 Jan. 1952

SUBJECT Conversion of Railroad Cars to
Russian Gauge

NO. OF PAGES

1

PLACE
ACQUIREDNO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

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DATE OF
INFO.SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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Apart from the railroad cars which are designated as fit for transit operations*, there are others which are designated as convertible from standard to Russian gauge and vice versa. There are two methods of converting railroad cars. The older one, which is still used predominantly, entails a change of wheel sets**. German railroad cars which can be converted in this way are marked with an "r" following the type designation of the cars, i.e., G(Güter wagon)r = convertible boxcar; O r = convertible gondola car, etc.). The exact number of such cars in the DDR-RB is not known. However, it is believed that not more than five per cent of the various types of cars are convertible in this way. Another method of converting freight cars to Russian gauge entails the shifting of the wheel sets on their axles by means of hydraulic plants until the gauge desired is reached. This procedure was developed in Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1949. However, it appears that this method has not yet been developed to the point where it can be generally introduced***. It is not known whether the cars that can be converted in this way have special markings.

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Comment: The designation of a freight car as fit for transit (long distance or international) operations is not related to its convertibility to different gauges, nor is the number of axles a factor to be considered. A railroad car is considered to be fit for transit operations if it meets "RIV" requirements with regard to its measurements condition, and safety factors (brakes and lubricants). These RIV regulations were included in an international agreement on the use of rolling stock in European countries. The transit fitness of a railroad car is checked by the responsible national railroad authorities when it enters a foreign country. Cars which are not up to international requirements are returned. For this reason, cars to be dispatched out of a country must be carefully checked with regard to their fitness for transit operations in order to avoid any danger of having them returned by the neighboring country. The cars fit for transit operations do not differ in their mechanical parts from standard cars; they are simply cars which meet RIV requirements.

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Auth: HR 70-2

Date: 30 Apr 78